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New York

President:	Mr. Churkin	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Mrs. Murmokaitė
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramirez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting. On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Mladenov, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Jerusalem.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: Let me begin by wishing all our Jewish colleagues and their families "*shanah tovah*" on the occasion of Rosh Hashanah. I would also like to wish "*eid mubarak*" to all our Muslim colleagues who will celebrate Eid al-Adha next week.

I begin my briefing today with grave concern over the violence and continuing clashes in and around the Old City of Jerusalem. On the morning of 13 September, the Israeli police entered the area outside the Al-Aqsa Mosque in what they said was an operation to head off attempts by extremists to disrupt visits by Jews and non-Muslim tourists. As Palestinian youth sought to barricade themselves in the Mosque, clashes ensued. According to an official statement by the Israeli police, pipe bombs, flares and stones had been stockpiled by the protestors. The Muslim Waqf reported that during this period its guards, for the first time, were not allowed in the compound and that three of its staff membes had been injured. At least 60 others were injured in related fighting.

This pattern of clashes has continued with varying intensity for three days in the Al-Aqsa compound/Temple Mount and the Old City of Jerusalem. It comes after sweeping restrictions on entry into the compound that Israel applied beginning on 26 August. Since then, the Government has decreed an entry ban for members of Muslim and some Jewish groups considered to be extremist. These latest incidents have echoed widely and have been condemned across the Muslim world and beyond, including by Palestinian President Abbas. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has stated that his Government will use all means to maintain the status quo and law and order at the compound.

As the Middle East faces a vicious tide of terror and extremism, such serious provocations have the potential to ignite violence well beyond the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. I urge all political, community and religious leaders to ensure that visitors and worshippers demonstrate restraint and respect for the sanctity of the area. All sides have a responsibility to refrain from provocative actions and rhetoric. It is imperative that the historic status quo be preserved, in line with the agreements between Israel and His Majesty the King of Jordan, as Custodian of the Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem.

Against this backdrop, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has left an indelible scar on the people and landscape of the region. Frustration, fear and violence have continued to spiral, undermining belief in finding a way out of the impasse. Over the past three months, the Middle East Quartet envoys have actively consulted with Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and key international partners on how to preserve the two-State solution and establish conditions for the parties to return to meaningful negotiations. All of our discussions have highlighted the region's determination to play a constructive role in resolving the conflict.

But the message from all could not be more clear. Patience is running out. A comprehensive approach must be advocated, consisting of bold, concrete actions on the ground, in the region and internationally. It will necessitate significant policy shifts on the part of Israel, as well as an unflinching commitment on the Palestinian side to achieving genuine national unity. I am encouraged by the efforts of Israel in recent months to ease some restrictions in the West Bank and Gaza. I call on the Government to expand upon them in order to address humanitarian, economic and infrastructural challenges, particularly in Area C of the West Bank. Progress in these areas, based on previously agreed steps, would significantly increase economic opportunities and strengthen security for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Such initiatives must be part of a wider political process aimed at facilitating, not substituting for, a final status agreement. The Palestinian people also

rightly expect their leaders to act decisively to advance national unity. I note the decision of the leadership to consult over the next three months with all factions and concerned Arab States on holding a meeting of the Palestinian National Council for the first time in almost two decades. The Secretary-General encourages all factions to seize that opportunity to take constructive steps to achieve unity on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) principles and to strengthen the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Regional and international constructive engagement is also key in this process. I encourage Israel to recognize the potential of the Arab Peace Initiative not just for sustainable peace and economic development, but also for creating a shared security architecture in a region that is in turmoil. At the international level, the Secretary-General will chair a meeting of the Quartet on 30 September in order to discuss how to link regional and international efforts to create conditions on the ground for a return to meaningful negotiations.

Even as efforts intensify to return to an atmosphere conducive to talks, the situation on the ground remains precarious. This past month, clashes between Palestinians and Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank continued, injuring one Palestinian and four Israelis. One hundred and fifteen Palestinians were injured by the Israel Defence Forces, while six members of the Israeli security forces were injured by Palestinians. In the West Bank, Israeli security forces arrested 282 Palestinians. On 13 September, one Israeli died and two were slightly injured in a car accident in Jerusalem, which may have been caused by a rock-throwing incident.

Also deeply troubling is the continuing Israeli policy of settlement construction and the demolition of Palestinian-owned structures in Area C of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. I call upon Israel to freeze demolitions, to reverse relocation plans and — critically — to expedite the approval of outstanding planning submissions and enable community-led planning processes. Since my last briefing, some 50 Palestinian structures have been demolished. I am alarmed that the calendar month of August saw the highest number of demolitions since June 2010, with 142 Palestinian-owned structures demolished and over 200 people displaced.

Turning to Gaza, let me begin by reminding the Council that the situation there remains precarious and there is growing discontent among the population. With power outages averaging 12 to 16 hours per day, and with 40,000 public sector employees not having received full salaries for over one year, the people of Gaza are suffering. The United Nations will continue to support the efforts of the legitimate Palestinian institutions and to reach out to all factions in order to ensure that the humanitarian, social and economic challenges of Gaza are addressed.

Over the last month, five rockets were fired at Israel by militant groups from Gaza, of which one impacted an open area in southern Israel without causing injury, while a further 10 rockets were test-fired at the sea. Israeli security forces conducted two airstrikes inside the Strip, neither of which resulted in injuries. Such incidents underscore the fragile dynamics within Gaza which, without positive change, will continue to provide fertile ground for extremism to flourish — extremism that will ultimately undermine the Palestinian goal of statehood.

Israeli measures to relax some movement restrictions on Gaza over the past year have not enabled people to maintain normal family and economic ties or to increase their economic self-sufficiency. Moreover, restrictions on the import of goods defined as having a dual use continue to impede humanitarian recovery and reconstruction efforts.

The United Nations reiterates its call for a full lifting of all closures on Gaza, as envisaged in resolution 1860 (2009), with due consideration for the security concerns of Israel and Egypt. In that context, I am glad to report that reconstruction, despite funding shortfalls, is picking up speed I reiterate my call to international partners to disburse their pledges made during the Cairo conference. Meanwhile, some 94,000 homeowners have procured construction material to repair their homes. Construction is also progressing on 315 projects, including housing, water networks and schools, which have been submitted for Israeli approval. Eighteen projects have been completed and 149 are ongoing.

Let me be clear on one point related to Gaza: without genuine Palestinian reconciliation and unity, all efforts to improve the situation will face major difficulties. I welcome the determination of Prime Minister Hamdallah and his efforts to find a solution to the

problem of public sector employees in Gaza. The United Nations stands ready to work with all stakeholders and to support the Government in mobilizing the necessary resources for that process.

With regard to Lebanon, the Council heard a briefing by Special Coordinator Kaag on 2 September. We welcome the launch of a political leaders' dialogue on 9 September to address key issues, including the presidency. On the same day, Prime Minister Salam convened the Cabinet, which agreed on a new waste-management plan. Demonstrators continue to raise demands relating to services and the performance of the political leadership.

On 22 and 25 August, heavy clashes between factions in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain Al-Hilweh led to a number of fatalities. Following the negotiation of a ceasefire, the situation has now returned to calm.

The situation in area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remains generally quiet. The cooperation of Israel and Lebanon with UNIFIL was illustrated on 20 August. when four rockets exploded in northern Israel without causing injury. Close coordination between UNIFIL and the parties resulted in quick clarification that the rockets that had landed south of the Blue Line had in fact originated from Syria and not from southern Lebanon. In response, Israeli forces hit Syrian military positions in and near the town of Quneitra.

Allow me to conclude by underlining that, for too long, the Israeli and Palestinian populations have lived their lives vacillating between hope and fear, with fear frequently triumphing. The time has now come to right that balance and restore the hope for a peaceful future for both Palestinians and Israelis. To do so will require a broad approach that integrates tough political decisions by the parties on the ground, focused engagement and goodwill of key regional actors, and coherent, reliable support from the international community. The United Nations stands ready to play its role in helping to shape this strategy and to work towards the goal of a comprehensive and just peace in the region.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.